

INTRODUCTION to BIBLE PROPHECY ("Cliff Notes" Version)

by Charles Meek



Was Jesus a reliable prophet?

SUMMARY: A common view of Bible prophecy is that Jesus will return bodily at the end of time to punish the reprobate and save the faithful (again). This is usually accepted without question. However, because false predictions about the Second Coming and end of the world are so prevalent (and have been for 2,000 years), many Christians are increasingly willing to seriously re-examine whether this tradition is truly biblical.

THESIS: Old Testament prophecy of Jesus' First Advent (Isaiah 9, 53, etc.), was, of course, fulfilled by his bodily appearance. But, "Second Coming/End Times" prophecy may actually be **ALL** (or at least mostly) about the changing of the covenants—culminating with Jesus' divine (but non-bodily) COMING IN JUDGMENT against Old Covenant Israel in AD 70. This is the so-called preterist view. This view has been part of church teaching since the early church fathers and is again gaining adherents.

Let's walk through how this could be so. To grasp this, take yourself out of your modern setting and see yourself as part of the original first-century audience of the New Testament, who would have been steeped in the Old Testament apocalyptic language. Remember that the Bible was written FOR us but not TO us. This will be a short introduction and you should look up the passages I cite to see how they fit together, and do your own research into this question ("test all things," 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

1. The foundation of Bible prophecy is Deuteronomy 27-32. Here we see a discussion about God's covenant with Israel (29:1), which could be sustained only **IF** the Israelites were obedient. The passage intimates that at some time in the future—at the “end” (32:20), further described as the “latter end” (32:29)—Israel would break their side of the covenant (31:16) and be destroyed (28:20, 24, 33, 45, 48, 61, 64; 32:23, 26).
2. Deuteronomy 27-32 was known to the subsequent Old Testament writers (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Micah, Malachi, etc.) and was certainly in mind when making their own prophetic utterances. These subsequent prophets elaborated on the passage in Deuteronomy, pointing more specifically to AD 70, when the Old Covenant would be washed away. This would happen at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple—when the ancient custom of temple sacrifices for sin ended forever and the priesthood was dissolved. For example, Daniel 12 prophesied that the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:6) would happen when the “power of the holy people comes to an end” (Daniel 12:7), and when “the regular burnt offering is taken away” (Daniel 12:11)—which would be the time of the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 12:11). Jesus confirmed Daniel's time line in the Olivet Discourse (Abomination of Desolation, Matthew 24:15), which would close out the END OF THE AGE (Matthew 24:3, 13) while some of those living in the first century were still alive (Matthew 24:34)—all coincident with the destruction of the temple (Matthew 24:2). This was clearly the culminating end of the Old Covenant Age, which was just in front of the biblical writers (Hebrews 8:13). It was never to be the *end of time*, as many Christians think, but rather the “time of the end”—the end of the Old Covenant Age.
3. Jesus tied the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 27-32 to his own generation multiple times. For example, the time of VENGEANCE from Deuteronomy 32:35, 41, 43 (cf. Isaiah 63:4) was the first-century generation. Jesus said, “**THESE are the days of VENGEANCE to fulfill all that is written**” (Luke 21:22, 32). Jesus also echoed the Deuteronomy prophecy about a “perverse generation” (Deuteronomy 32:20), and told the Jews of his day that THEY were that generation (Matthew 12:38, 39, 42; 16:4; 17:17; Luke 9:41; 11:29-32). The other New Testament writers affirmed their own generation as the “perverse” one (Acts 2:40; Romans 10:19; Philippians 2:13-15; Hebrews 10:30-39).
4. In Matthew 3:1-12, John the Baptist spoke of the wrath of Jesus, which was “about to come” (Matthew 3:7, literal translation). Jesus would baptize them with fire (Matthew 3:11) and, indeed, the axe was *already* laid at the root of the tree (Matthew 3:10), teaching that the judgment prophesied in Malachi 3-4 was imminent. The judgment was truly imminent and ties perfectly with AD 70. (This passage in Matthew 3 confuses Christians because they try it to Jesus' First Advent. But it is only tangentially about the First Advent and mostly about his soon coming IN JUDGMENT in AD 70, which is made even clearer in the passages below.)
5. In Matthew 23:29-39 Jesus told the Jews of his day that THEY were the target of his wrath, upon whom the blood of all the prophets **EVER IN HISTORY** would befall, fulfilling the

prophecy from Deuteronomy 32:43! This is an astounding prophecy which we cannot overlook or brush off. The Great Judgment of which the Bible frequently speaks was directed directly at the generation of Jews living in the first century. (While each person is judged when he dies per Hebrews 9:27 and other passages, the overwhelming number of judgment passages in the New Testament are about AD 70.)

6. Revelation references the prophecy of Jesus from Matthew 23 several times (Revelation 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Besides, the clear reference to Matthew 23 (which would be fulfilled in Jesus' generation per Matthew 23:36), how can we be certain that the judgment in Revelation is also about Old Covenant Jerusalem? Well, there are numerous internal proofs that Revelation was written in the mid 60's AD. For example, it was written during the tribulation (Revelation 1:9), which Jesus time-restricted to *his own generation* (Matthew 24:9, 21, 29, 34). It was written while the temple was still standing (Revelation 11:1), and during the reign of Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome (Revelation 17:10) who ruled from AD 54 to AD 68. It also contains over 30 passages that demand its imminent fulfillment. We see such statements as "must shortly take place," "soon," "near," and "about to happen" over and over (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-20; etc.). Jesus' wrath promised in Revelation is unambiguously against "the great city Babylon" (Revelation 18:21-24) which is clearly identified as the "city where the Lord was slain" (Revelation 11:8-9), confirming that the Great Judgment was against Jerusalem.
7. In Matthew 21:12-46; 22:1-14, 23:29-39, 26:64, etc., it is abundantly clear that Jesus was teaching that He was about to take the covenantal blessings away from the Jewish nation and give it to others, namely the church. It is also clear from these passages that the Jews understood this condemnation, which is ultimately what got Jesus crucified. Christians have a hard time understanding Jesus' statements that He did not come to bring peace, but a sword and fire (Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:49). Wasn't Jesus the Prince of Peace? Yes, but an overwhelming focus of the gospels is Jesus' condemnation of the Jews of his day. This would happen at the Parousia per Matthew 10:15-23; 16:27-28; 24:34; 26:64; etc. The Parousia is often understood as the "Second Coming," but it literally means "presence," and is best understood, in context, as Jesus' **Effectual Divine Presence** in Judgment (against Old Covenant Israel), precisely the same as God's Old Testament "comings" in judgment numerous times against his enemies.
8. So, why would Jesus have been so upset with the Jews of the first century? Well, (a) they were indeed evil (Luke 11:29), (b) they fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy (Luke 21:22), and (c) they refused to accept Him as Savior (Matthew 21:33-46; 22:1-14; 23:37).
9. Biblical writers often referred to the First and Second Comings as two parts to the same event. Examples: Isaiah 9-11; 61:1-2; Daniel 9:24-27; Zechariah 12-14; Matthew 3:1-12; Hebrews 9:24—28.

10. Christians underestimate the importance of AD 70. With the temple gone, and with it the sacrifices for sin, recorded genealogies, and rituals—Jesus replaced the temple as the sole source of our salvation (Revelation 21:22).

OBJECTIONS TO THE AD 70 THESIS:

OBJECTION #1. This cannot be the whole story because we know that WE are living in the end times today. **ANSWER:** This is simply an assumption from the echo chamber. Let's stick with the Bible. There are 15 primary mentions of the end times/last days in the New Testament. The setting of none of them can be placed outside the first century. Examples: Acts 2:17-21; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 4:7, 17; 1 John 2:17-18.

OBJECTION #2. The preterist view cannot be correct because we know that Jesus has not returned. **ANSWER:** I know this is shocking to you if you have not studied this carefully, and formed your thinking solely from your denominational echo chamber. But I believe that you have simply misunderstood both the NATURE and TIMING of Jesus "Second Coming." Acts 1:9-11 notwithstanding (that's another article). Jesus did not promise to return bodily, but rather promised to return just as Yahweh "came" in DIVINE JUDGMENT numerous times in the Old Testament against groups of people (Isaiah 13:9-13 against Babylon; Isaiah 19:1-22 against Egypt; etc.). In these judgments, nobody actually saw God, but did see the effects of his "coming." Jesus promised over and over to come while some of those living in the first century were still alive (Matthew 10:23; 16:27-28; 24:29-34; 26:64; Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-20; etc.) In fact, there are over 100 imminence statements in the New Testament demanding the soon fulfillment of all last days' events. While there are a couple of Second Coming passages that have no time-limitation associated with them, there are no Second Coming passages that demand a fulfillment thousands of years into the future. It does violence to the text to read thousands of years into these passages without a time-restriction, as they must be interpreted in light of the time-texts in so many other passages. The only way to grasp Jesus Parousia ("Second Coming") that does not do violence to the text is to understand it as a Divine Presence in Judgment in AD 70.

OBJECTION #3. OK, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament THOUGHT Jesus would return in their generation, but they were simply wrong. **ANSWER:** I find it hard to believe a Christian would say that, as this falls right into the hands of the skeptics. If Jesus and the writers of the New Testament were wrong, they were false prophets! If they were false prophets, how can we trust anything they taught? Indeed, the credibility of Christianity is at stake.

OBJECTION #4. Hey, look. We know Jesus has not come yet because when He does there will be a time of perfection on earth according Isaiah 65-66 and Revelation 21-22—in the new heaven and new earth. In this future time the wolf will graze with the lamb; there will be no more death, crying or tears. **ANSWER:** If you read these passages carefully, there is still sin and

death in the “new heaven and new earth” (Isaiah 65:20; Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15). So, this is not Utopia-ville. In these passages, God has defeated his enemies, but life continues on. Interestingly, there are still people who have not heard about God and require evangelism (Isaiah 66: 15-19). Regarding the statement about no more death, there is a *present* reality for the Christian that death has already been abolished (John 11:25-26; 2 Timothy 1:10). The statement about “no more tears” refers to statements in the Bible about the long-awaited Messiah; Jesus has (past tense) “borne” our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4, etc.). Proper biblical interpretation demands that we separate the literal from the figurative. These statements that you may have considered as literal are biblical symbolisms about the benefits of the Messianic kingdom—i.e. the new covenant order, which we now enjoy. For the Christian, “old things have passed away; behold all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17; Revelation 21:5).

OBJECTION #5. Well, I see with my head that you are right. But with my heart I still want to hope for a Second Coming. **ANSWER:** Just what do you hope to have at a supposed Second Coming that you do not have now? Your hope may be misplaced. The true Christian hope is heaven, and you already have that waiting for you now as a believer!

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